

19 June 1968

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

SUBJECT: Conversation with Senator Howard Baker (R., Tenn.)

1. This afternoon, Senator Howard Baker called me and, in my absence, talked with [ ] The Senator said that some months ago we had briefed him on the Soviet ABM system and that in view of Senator Cooper's current efforts on the floor regarding the American ABM problem, Senator Baker would like us to give him an updated briefing on the Soviet ABM system. He added that he would like advice on what parts of the briefing he could use on the floor, and suggested that he might invite other senators to attend our briefing if we wished. He went on to explain that the ABM problem will reach the Senate floor on Monday, 24 June, and he would, therefore, like to be briefed on Thursday, 20 June, since the Senate will be discussing the tax bill on Friday.

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2. After consulting with the Director, I called Senator Baker and told him I would be glad to come to his office tomorrow afternoon to discuss the above matter if he thought it would be worth his time. I pointed out, however, that there had been little significant change in the Soviet ABM picture since his earlier briefing and that although we were still studying the problem, I doubted we had anything of major significance to add to what the Senator already knew. I said I realized there was considerable interest in this subject, and that I rather had the impression that the resulting speculation may have escalated the matter out of proportion to what the facts as we know them would justify. The Senator asked what sort of escalation I was talking about. I said this was only an impression, but I thought from some of the calls we had received from around town, and from some press articles, it appeared that some people might be overreading the situation.

3. The Senator said that he had mentioned his earlier briefing on this subject at a Republican Policy Committee meeting Tuesday (the 18th) and he wondered if this was what I was referring to when I said the problem had "escalated." I assured him this was not the case, explaining that apparent interest in the subject had started some days before. He seemed relieved. The Senator said he had his notes from the earlier briefing and he didn't want to say anything on the floor that might get us in trouble. He said he had the impression that we "didn't want to get caught in the middle." I told him this was not our main concern, that I would be happy to come to his office any time around noon or afternoon tomorrow and tell him what I could, but I simply didn't want to take up his time unless it would be worth his while. I emphasized that we wanted to be fully responsive to any questions the Senator might have, and that if he thought it worth his time I would be over to see him at his convenience tomorrow. He thanked me but, after hesitating, said he really didn't think this would be necessary at this time.

SIGNED

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